

IN THE CLAIMS

This listing of the claims replaces all prior versions of the claims in the application.

1. (currently amended): A method for preparing a non-human animal for screening for agents that modulate tolerance to a hepatitis C virus (HCV) immunogen comprising the steps of preparing a nucleic acid directing liver-specific expression of said HCV immunogen, and exogenously delivering said nucleic acid to the liver of said animal by portal vein injection, under conditions that result in the sustained expression of the HCV immunogen in the liver thereby inducing immunological tolerance to said HCV immunogen, wherein the HCV immunogen is expressed for at least one month in said animal.

2. (original): The method of claim 1 wherein the nucleic acid is packaged in an adeno-associated virus particle.

3. (previously presented): A method for preparing a non-human animal for screening for agents that modulate tolerance to a hepatitis C virus (HCV) immunogen comprising delivering said HCV immunogen to the liver of said animal by portal vein injection under conditions that result in sustained presence of said HCV immunogen thereby inducing immunological tolerance to said HCV immunogen, and wherein said delivery is not by expression of a nucleic acid present in the germline of said animal, wherein the HCV immunogen is present for at least one month in said animal.

4. (canceled)

5. (canceled)

6. (original): The method of claim 1, wherein the animal is a rodent.

7. (original): The method of claim 3, wherein the animal is a rodent.

8. (canceled)
9. (canceled)
10. (original): The method of claim 1, wherein the immunogen is the NS5a protein of HCV.
11. (original): The method of claim 3, wherein the immunogen is the NS5a protein of HCV.
12. (original): A non-human animal for screening for agents that modulate tolerance to an immunogen prepared by the method of claim 1, wherein said animal is tolerant to said immunogen.
13. (canceled)
14. (canceled)
15. (previously presented): The method of claim 3, wherein said screening is for agents that modulate tolerance to a viral immunogen, and said animal is tolerant to said viral immunogen.
16. (previously presented): A non-human animal for screening for agents that modulate tolerance to a HCV immunogen, said animal prepared by the method of claim 1, wherein said animal is tolerant to said HCV immunogen.
17. (previously presented): A non-human animal for screening for agents that modulate tolerance to a HCV immunogen, said animal prepared by the method of claim 3, wherein said animal is tolerant to said HCV immunogen.

18. (original): The non-human animal of claim 16, wherein the animal is a rodent.
19. (original): The non-human animal of claim 17, wherein the animal is a rodent.
20. (original): The non-human animal of claim 16, wherein the HCV immunogen is the NS5a protein of HCV.
21. (original): The non-human animal of claim 17, wherein the HCV immunogen is the NS5a protein of HCV.
- 22-40. (canceled)
41. (previously presented): A method for preparing a non-human animal for screening for agents that modulate tolerance to a hepatitis C virus (HCV) immunogen comprising delivering a nucleic acid directing expression of said HCV immunogen to the liver of said animal, under conditions that result in the sustained expression of the HCV immunogen in the liver, provided that said nucleic acid is not present in the germline of said animal, wherein the HCV immunogen is expressed for at least one month in said animal.
42. (canceled)
43. (new): The method of claim 1, wherein the nucleic acid comprises a liver-specific promoter.
44. (new): The method of claim 43, wherein the liver-specific promoter is an alpha-1 anti-trypsin (AAT) promoter.
45. (new): The method of claim 1, wherein the nucleic acid comprises a liver-specific enhancer.

46. (new): The method of claim 45, wherein the liver-specific enhancer is an apolipoprotein E (ApoE) enhancer.